



THE MONOGRAPH SERIES

RECORDS OF EARLY AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE
AS SOURCE MATERIAL

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MONOGRAPH SIX

THE COTTAGES OF CAPE ANN—PART I

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Research and Measured Drawings by Frank Chouteau Brown

Photographs by Arthur C. Haskell

The early Colonial cottage, wherever it may still be found unspoiled by later additions and changes, possesses a charm and attraction that is not always conveyed by its larger and more formal dwelling associate. Usually of only one story, or a "story and a half" in height, it generally contains only two to three rooms upon the first floor, and its plan is of the simplest—an entrance near one end, a room along what remains of the front, and the rear space divided into two rooms in width.

When the plan is of less depth than that required for two rooms, the entrance may be nearer the middle of the front, and a room at either side; or, if the door and stairs remain near one end, there may be an ell extended at one side, instead of at the rear, as is more likely to be the case with a larger type of plan. And frequently these ells are either built on at later dates, or even a shed moved up against the cottage and connected with it—usually performing the function of a service or kitchen addition.

The upper story may be left unfinished, or divided into a couple of rooms—rarely more, as the dormers now found in the sloping roofs are almost invariably of a date subsequent to the original construction. The chimney—overlarge for its diminutive plan—was generally placed back of the hall and stairway, as was the custom with the larger houses of the period. In that location it could serve the two larger rooms, of which one was the kitchen—or combined kitchen and living room—and the other a sleeping room off the kitchen, found in so many of the larger dwellings of that time.

The earliest type has already been shown in the

original Riggs House (Vol. XIX, Monograph One), a three-room structure of squared logs with a pitch roof. And the same dwelling shows, in its later addition, the gambrel-roof type that came into local fashion just about the end of the Seventeenth Century, and continued to be the almost invariable arrangement until well past the middle of the Eighteenth. Between about 1690 and 1760, almost all the smaller dwellings on "the Cape" were of either the steep or flat gambrel design; by far the larger number being of the comfortable squat outline seen in so many of these accompanying illustrations.

This early squat gambrel roof gradually became steeper and sharper in pitch, until it was succeeded by a flatter single-slope pitched roof near the end of the Eighteenth Century, which, with its smaller chimney, soon came to mark the cottage of the early Nineteenth. Perhaps the dormers covered by a simple extension of the upper roof slope may have been the earlier type—though even they are seldom to be found occurring in the original construction of the Cape cottage. They were probably soon succeeded by the gable-fronted dormer treatment, of which the most authentic and earliest example to be seen in this group of illustrations is the dormer on the "Cottage at the Head of the Cove" in Annisquam.

And so, too, the very modesty of these early cottage dwellings makes it difficult to find many whose early history and exact date of construction are known. Usually one is dependent upon some family legend, or the stories carried down to some existing "early inhabitant" by his elders, for a clue to the early ownership or records of these simple dwellings.

Cape Ann—named by Prince Charles after his mother, Anne of Denmark, wife of James I—extends about eight miles into the Atlantic, separating Massachusetts and Ipswich Bays, and has an area of about forty-three square miles. The entire coast line is very irregular, and starting at “The Cut”—a short canal cut at an early date to connect the tip of Squam River with Gloucester Harbor—its margin is occupied by a continuous settlement, the principal sections of which are known by many descriptive local names, such as, Riverdale, Annisquam, Bay View, Lanesville, Folly Cove, Pigeon Cove, Sandy Bay (now Rockport), Straitsmouth, Land’s End, Long Beach, Bass Rocks, East Gloucester, and the Harbor. On the interior are the Farms and the legendary ruins of Dogtown Common, while a considerable area of land upon the mainland is also known as West Gloucester, extending toward Essex and Ipswich and along the Magnolia Shore.

About 1700, or soon thereafter, one Joshua Norwood came and settled on Gully Point, Straitsmouth, near Land’s End, where he built a log cabin, which was afterwards removed to Dock Square, where it now stands at one side of Atlantic Avenue; with the Hannah Jumper house upon the other, the two being

among the oldest cottages in Rockport. The rough log construction of the former may still be seen inside.

Nearby, the gambrel-roofed cottage of Francis (“Red Cap”) Norwood still overlooks the harbor from its old location back from the more modern Atlantic Avenue. It was built about 1720, and its large central chimney contains the two largest fireplaces in the town. From Dock Square, the main road to Land’s End is first known as Mt. Pleasant, then as South Street, and this section is usually called Cove Hill, and leads to the “South End.” “No. Six South Street,” built well before 1750, probably about 1725, is a typical gambrel-roof cottage, which has been unusually well cared for and preserved. While just across Prospect Street is another old cottage, originally belonging either to an early Poole or another Tarr family offshoot, which has been recently restored. Farther along South Street is a veritable *congerie* of Smith, Poole, and Tarr family dwellings, all dating from about 1750 to 1775.

Most of the small dwellings that once crowded the lanes and streets of Gloucester and Rockport have been replaced by the newer buildings and “improvements” called for by the prosperity and growing business of these centers, but a few still remain tucked away



OLD WOODBURY HOUSE—ABOUT 1665-70—ANNISQUAM, MASSACHUSETTS

Now Kitchen Ell Back of Main House

[82]



JOSHUA NORWOOD'S CABIN, ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS

Known as "The Oldest House in Rockport"

in the older streets and back corners of the towns, where business has not yet come to disturb them.

As was so often the case, these little cottages were originally built facing to the south, at a time when there were no established streets—and even the main travelled roads were an informal and movable element in the community, the houses being most usually approached across fields or woodlands by means of a footpath. It has been the fate of many of these original homesteads to be later turned into the kitchen or service portions of larger houses, later built to front the streets—as in the old Woodbury cottage at Annisquam (page 82). Again and again, their compactness has made it easy for their owners to remove themselves, with bag and baggage, and almost bearing their "cot" upon their backs, to a new and more convenient situation. This is a pilgrimage that has happened to more than a few of the houses illustrated in this present group.

Most frequently—where still upon their original foundations—they now stand at all angles to later-day streets, which—particularly upon "the Cape"—wind their way about, while avoiding the sturdy ledge outcroppings and irregular boulder-droppings left by the

terminal moraine that scarred and grooved the contours of the township. Latter-day dwellings may front primly upon street and square; and often jostle the corners of their older associates in the doing o't; but the little dwellings of the earlier generations remain undisturbed and placid among them, secure in their possession of that same vague but unescapable "it," that is so woefully lacking in the construction of later generations, particularly the houses—of whatever size—built from about 1830, or during this last century "of progress."

In fact, one rather suspects that some part of their compositional charm may come from this very informality of relation to the street lines before them; forcing that glimpse of the front at an angle that shows the spectator also a considerable part of the house-end gable—this being rather an advantage than a disadvantage in the general appearance and appeal made by these unpretentious dwellings.

But so many have been irretrievably spoiled by ill-advised and crudely undertaken alterations and additions! For every one photographed, at least a dozen have been passed by because of the unfeeling treatment, rather than the neglect, to which they have been



COTTAGE BACK OF OLD BURYING GROUND—1750—ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS



OLD COTTAGE BACK FROM ROAD—1720—ANNISQUAM, MASSACHUSETTS

[84]

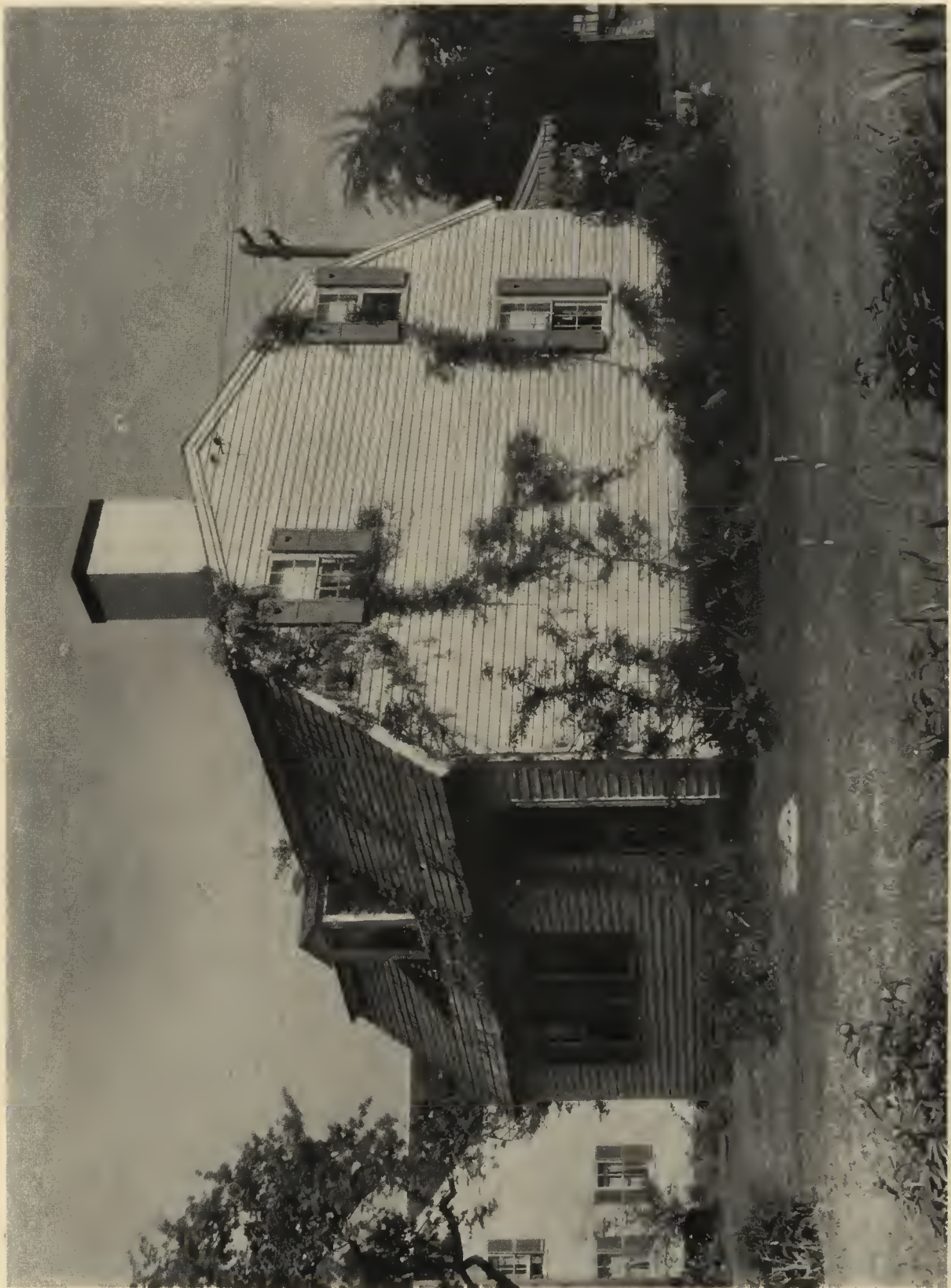


OLD COTTAGES BESIDE ROAD TO EAST GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS



COTTAGE ON WALNUT STREET—LAST HALF 18TH CENTURY—ANNISQUAM, MASSACHUSETTS

[85]



"OLD TARR HOMESTEAD"—6 SOUTH STREET, ROCKPORT, CAPE ANN, MASSACHUSETTS

[86]



"OLD COTTAGE AT HEAD OF THE COVE"—APP. 1725—ANNISQUAM, CAPE ANN, MASSACHUSETTS
Measured Drawings on Page 88

Measured July 15 & Drawn August 10, 1933 by Frank Chouteau Brown. A.L.A.

SECTION THROUGH COTTAGE CORNICE.

FIRST-FLOOR PLAN.

ROOMS:

- ROOM: 7'10" x 9'8"
- BEDROOM: 13'6" x 9'8"
- LIVING HALL: 14'8" x 15'6"
- KITCHEN-ELL.: 22'4"
- ENTRY: 4'0" x 3'8"

Scale of Inches for Details: 1 to 8 inches.

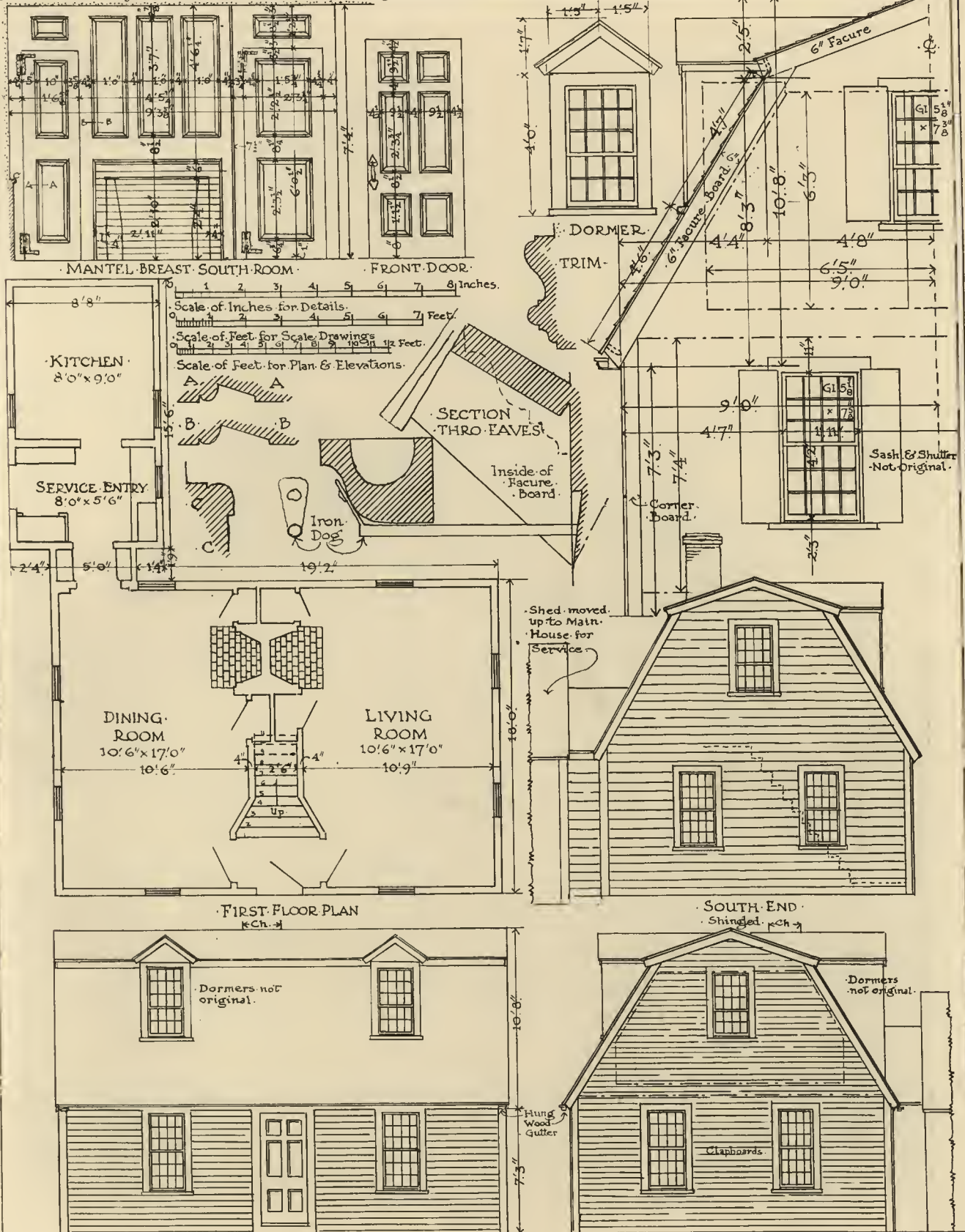
Scale of Feet for Section: 1 to 8 feet.

Scale of Feet for Plan & Elevation: 1 to 20 feet.

CLAPBOARDS app 4 1/2" to weather

OLD GAMBREL ROOF COTTAGE NEAR HEAD OF "THE COVE" APR 1725. ANNISQUAM CAPE ANN MASSACHUSETTS U.S.A.

Measured & Drawn by Frank Chouteau Brown Architect. July 9 & 10 1933



OLD POOLE COTTAGE PROBABLY BUILT ABOUT 1750-1760
ROCKPORT CAPE ANN MASSACHUSETTS U.S.A.

forcibly subjected! Mere neglect usually but adds illusion to the element of the picturesque. But the country carpenter—even possibly the city architect of general practice—may not possess that delicate sensibility that is necessary to take over these simple little survivors of an early age, and continue their charm and beauty, in a little enlarged and perhaps more fully dormered—and, possibly, also plumbed!—version.

Even some among the cottages illustrated here may be remembered by a fortunate few “early inhabitants” in a previous and more charming state than that to

which they have now attained—especially where they are now to be seen in a snugly washed and starched Sunday best. To many their older, more ordinary, workaday appearance, may have been preferable! One can understand the Puritan’s aversion to paint, as one recalls their vanished picturesqueness. No “paint up” and “clean up” campaigns in those days, we may be assured. And nowadays we have to suffer from our inordinate belief in neatness, cleanness, sanitation and efficiency, being the very be-all and end-all desired of our day and generation!



OLD POOLE (CAPT. TARR) COTTAGE—1750-60—ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS
Measured Drawings on Page 89

[90]

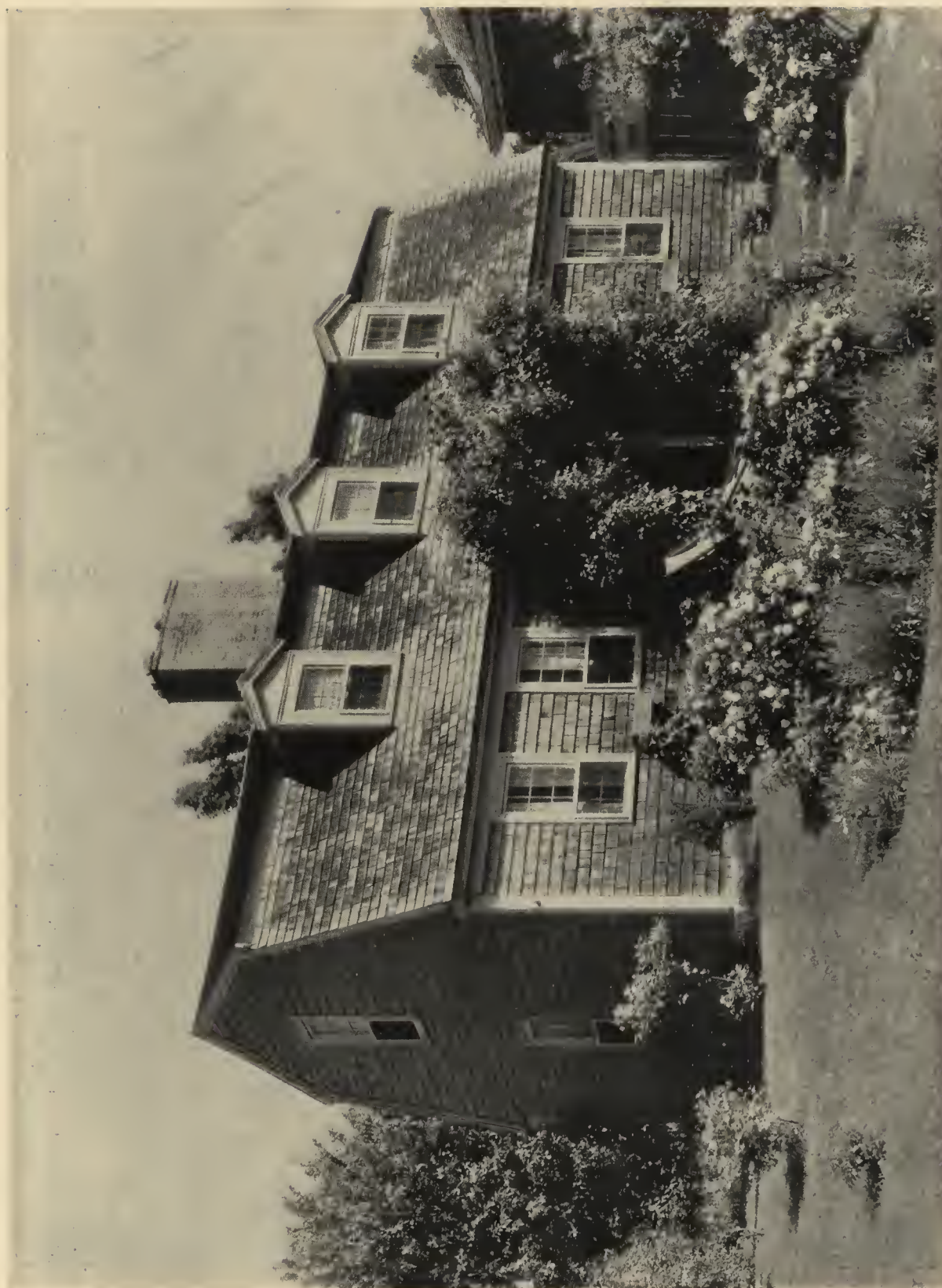


LANE HOMESTEAD—ABOUT 1825—ANNISQUAM, MASSACHUSETTS



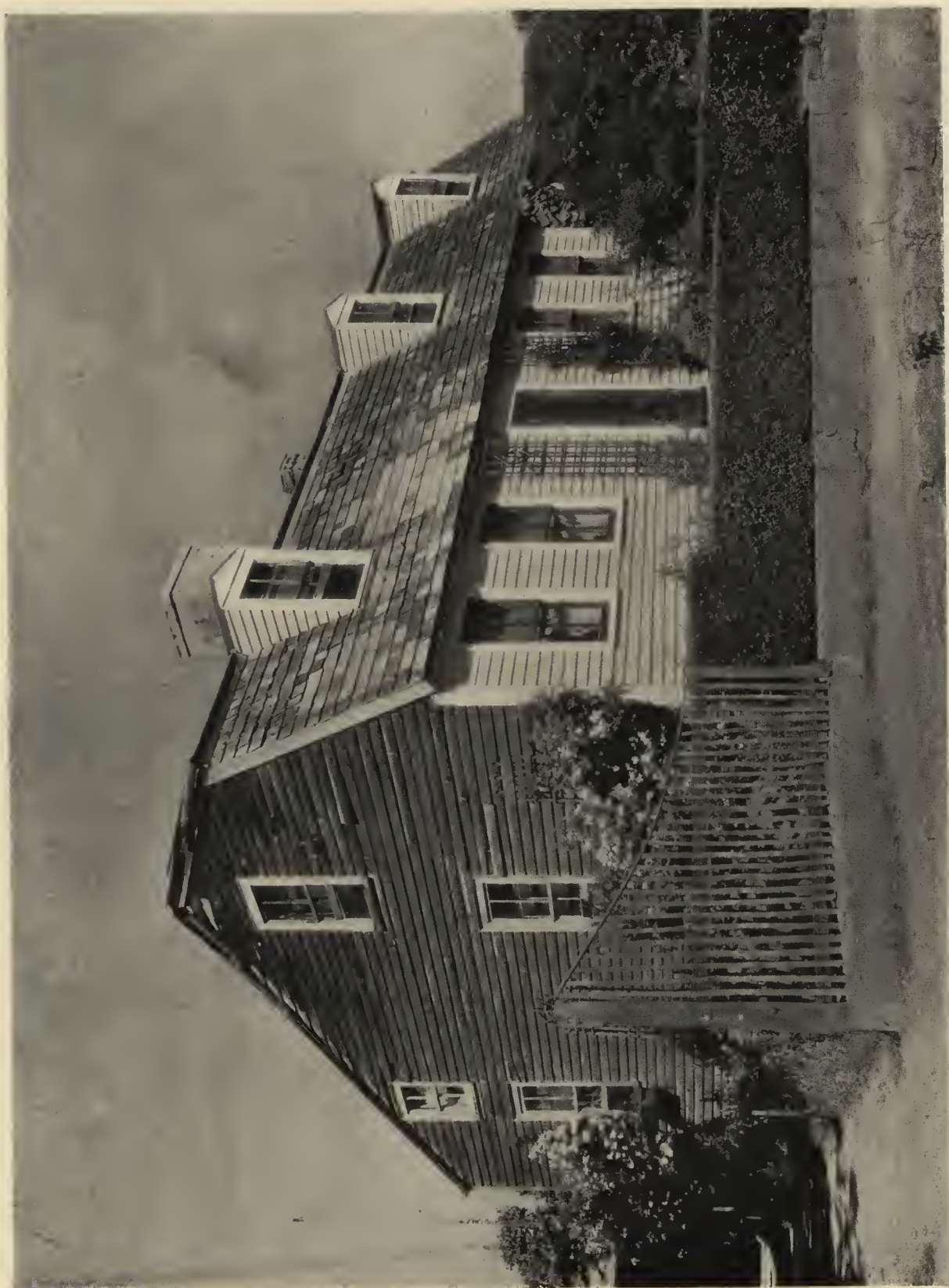
CAPT. WOODBURY HOUSE, FOLLY COVE, CAPE ANN, MASSACHUSETTS

[91]



FRANCIS ("RED CAP") NORWOOD HOUSE—1700-20—OVERLOOKING HARBOR, ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS

[92]



GAMAGE HOUSE, HIGH STREET—ABOUT 1725—ROCKPORT, CAPE ANN, MASSACHUSETTS

[93]



LANGFORD HOMESTEAD—ABOUT 1760—LANESVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS



CLARK COTTAGE, 8 BEACON STREET—ABOUT 1750—GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

[94]



BUTMAN HOUSE—1760—ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS



GAMBREL END COTTAGE WITH "JUTBY"—MAIN STREET, PIGEON COVE, MASSACHUSETTS

[95]



Detail of Living Room-Kitchen

"OLD COTTAGE AT HEAD OF THE COVE"—ANNISQUAM, MASSACHUSETTS

[96]